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Juvenile Arrested for Holyoke Arson

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan, Fire Chief David A. LaFond, and Hampden County District Attorney William M. Bennett announced that a 13-year old has been arrested and charged with setting the June 9, 2008 fire at the vacant Parsons paper mill on Sergeant Street in Holyoke.

The fire was jointly investigated by the Holyoke Fire Department, Holyoke Police Department and state police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal. Investigators determined that the fire was intentionally set.

State Fire Marshal Coan said, "I want to applaud the efforts of fire investigators for their quick and comprehensive response to this fire. They have been working round the clock to determine who was responsible for the fire and that led to last night's arrest."

Chief LaFond said, "Residents of this neighborhood should feel safer and sleep better tonight knowing this arsonist has been apprehended." He added, "This fire is a prime example of the threat to the community that juvenile firesetting poses. It is a serious problem nationally as well here in Massachusetts. In April of this year we lost two children in a juvenile-set fire on Beech Street."

LaFond said, "Children playing or youths experimenting with fire is not a natural phase that children will grow out of, but rather a dangerous behavior that must be addressed by trained professionals.

District Attorney Bennett said, "This was an inferno. We're very lucky no one was seriously injured. The firefighters did a great job!" The 13 year-old was arraigned this morning in Holyoke Juvenile Court on a delinquency complaint by reason of arson and breaking and entering charges arising from the fire. He was ordered held without bail until June 19 when a dangerousness hearing will be held. The case will be prosecuted by Assistant District Attorney Yvonne G. Pesce.

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According to the Mass. Fire Incident Reporting System (MFIRS), there have been 912 juvenile-set fires in MA in the last five years, causing \$9.5 million in property damage. Nearly half of these fires were building fires.

Coan said, "Watching this fire, I was extremely concerned for the firefighters. More firefighters are injured fighting vacant building fires than any other type of fire. Fortunately all of the firefighter injuries in this incident were minor." According to statistics from MFIRS, one firefighter is injured at every 6 vacant building fires compared with one at every 25 building fires in general.